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President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 52 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/387 and Corr.1)

Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. My delegation would like to join previous speakers in commending the Secretary-General for initiating the new reform proposals contained in his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1).

The report under consideration today is comprehensive and very timely and is aimed at implementing the goals of the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major international conferences, including the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

My delegation shares the view expressed by other delegations that the document represents a milestone on the road towards further improvements in the activities of both the General Assembly and the Secretariat. We believe that reform should be a continuing process, since there are still many areas in the United Nations which need to be rationalized. We deeply appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General to make the Organization into a more effective and flexible instrument in order to enable it to respond to the wide range of new global challenges.

My Government fully supports the strong commitment of the Secretary-General further to strengthen the United Nations. Under his leadership, the Organization has undergone numerous changes in recent years and significantly improved its performance.

There is no doubt that the full implementation of the second phase of the reform proposed by the Secretary-General will require constructive support on the part of the Member States. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the President of the General Assembly to enhance the transparency of the process, in which all interested delegations will be involved.

My delegation deems this approach to be the most appropriate one, as the report of the Secretary-General merits comprehensive deliberations which, we believe, will result in the adoption of a resolution endorsed by all Member States.

My delegation also commends the intention of the President of the General Assembly to prepare a paper that will provide explanations with respect to the major issues which have been raised by regional groups and Member States. This measure will undoubtedly accommodate the concerns of delegations and stimulate the negotiation process.

Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the activities of the Organization in the economic and social fields. We agree with the Secretary-General that

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the United Nations should expand its presence in the developing world by improving its effectiveness and its responsiveness.

We believe that the reform measures must enable the United Nations fully to implement all mandated programmes which strengthen the capacities of the developing countries to address the challenges of a globalized economy.

We welcome the idea of improving the planning and budgetary processes of the Organization. My delegation supports those delegations which think that the budget cycle needs to be modernized in order better to serve a renewed Organization. Indeed, a more balanced, transparent and strategic document must be elaborated that reflects our priorities and consequent resource requirements.

It goes without saying that further improvement of United Nations activities in the field of information is an integral part of the whole reform package. The role of the Department of Public Information must not be underestimated, since the United Nations is repositioning itself with a view to acquiring even greater relevance as an indispensable global institution. We believe also that the activities of the United Nations Information Centres deserve serious consideration.

We acknowledge the need to strengthen the activities of the General Assembly. We believe that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management must play a more active role in managing documentation and meetings.

We support also the continuing improvement of human resources management. We attach particular importance to the implementation of the principle of equitable geographic distribution with regard to Secretariat staff.

We wish to see a reformed Security Council that is open to dialogue and sends the international community a clear message that it stands ready to meet new challenges. We hope that the President of the General Assembly will bring the negotiation process back to life in order to reach a comprehensive package agreement on Council reform.

We welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society.

In conclusion, allow me to assure the Assembly of our full support for the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the role of the Organization in the twenty-first century and of the full cooperation of my delegation in the promotion of further deliberations.

Mrs. Hughes Ferrari (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): My delegation, while aligning itself fully with the statement made by Ambassador Vicente Vallenilla on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, considers it appropriate to make some brief comments on the specific and particular problems of the smallest States Members of the United Nations. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines undoubtedly falls into this category.

My Government is firm in its view that, notwithstanding our smallness and relative poverty, it is vital to our national interests that we maintain a presence at this forum, although the cost of establishing and maintaining a Mission in New York puts a great strain on an already overburdened economy. For this reason, it is critical that the representatives here in New York serve their country well. However, I will try to pinpoint one or two reasons why it is so very difficult for mini-States to play the kind of role to which we aspire.

First of all, it is quite obvious that the architects of the United Nations agenda were representatives of States that were not constrained by lack of resources, either financial or, more importantly, human. How otherwise could we explain why the vast bulk of the United Nations agenda is crammed into a few short weeks between September and December each year? During these weeks, all of the main committees are meeting, very often simultaneously. There are also numerous meetings of the plenary, as well as a multitude of other events, seminars, briefings, meetings of regional groups, and so on, which are an integral part of the functioning of the Organization. Add to this nightmarish scenario the vast mountain of official — and unofficial — documentation that has to be tackled on a daily basis, and one can easily see that a dozen or more bodies would be needed for a delegation to function in even a modest way.

For a Mission with what can only be described as a skeleton staff, it is quite impossible to contribute to the workings of the United Nations in the way that we would like, given that, try as we might, we have not

found a way to be in two places at once, far less three or more.

It may be impertinent of me to even think such scandalous thoughts, but I make bold to ask if it would not be possible to rethink the United Nations agenda with a view to spreading the work more evenly throughout the calendar year.

The other issue I wish to address is that of candidatures to the various United Nations bodies or organs. I wish to put forward the opinion that it is high time that the United Nations devised a system of equitable and automatic representation, on a rotating basis, for its Member States on its principal organs. Not only would this ensure equity, democracy and fairness in the system, but it would, at a stroke, remove the need for our endless processions to and from the Indonesian Lounge. This would not only free up prodigious amounts of time for hard-working delegations, but would also result in significant savings for Member States due to not having to campaign. I would like to suggest that these savings could be deposited in a special fund to assist the world's poor.

In closing, I quote from paragraph 23 of the Secretary-General's report:

> "The proliferation of meetings and official documents places excessive demands on both the Secretariat and Member States. Many smaller Member States now find it practically impossible to play a meaningful role in even the most crucial activities of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council".

I cannot say it any better than the Secretary-General did, and, on that note, I rest my case.

Mr. Balarezo (Peru)(*spoke in Spanish*): In a recent article on the future of the United Nations in the new millennium, the Deputy Secretary-General rightly maintained that the Organization faces three main challenges: the challenge of legitimacy, which implies that international organizations should be more transparent, participatory and democratic when it comes to taking decisions; the challenge of consistency, which requires programme adjustments and better inter-agency coordination, as well as a greater political willingness on the part of its Member States to provide resources and authority that the United Nations requires to comply with its objectives; and, finally, the challenge of effectiveness, measured in terms of available instruments and the effective implementation of internationally agreed commitments at the national level. The delegation of Peru fully shares this vision and feels that these three principles, along with transparency and accountability, are the basis on which the Organization should rest.

It is in this context that we welcome and congratulate the Secretary-General for the reform programme that he is submitting to us. This must be an undertaking by all of us. The Organization is at the service of member countries, and member countries must offer its Secretariat the means and instruments that make it possible to comply with these objectives, which are none other than those defined and approved by the members themselves. There can be no other agenda.

These reforms, as correctly pointed out by the Secretary-General, must be accompanied by changes in intergovernmental bodies, and for this reason, it is urgent to streamline and prioritize the work of the General Assembly, strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council in the area of development, resolve economic and social international problems and proceed immediately to the democratization of the Security Council.

Peru agrees with the Secretary-General on the need to adjust the Organization's budget and programme instruments to the priorities that we have set for ourselves. It is crucial for the delegation of Peru that the United Nations system programme of activities be focused on the eradication of global poverty, and this requires that the developing countries achieve high-end sustained economic growth. It is also fundamental to fully implement the Millennium Declaration, as well as the Monterrey consensus and the outcome of the Johannesburg summit.

We support the ideas of the Secretary-General to emphasize questions that are not receiving proper attention, such as globalization and its positive and negative consequences for development, migration, water shortages and conflict prevention, among other things.

But we also believe there are other serious problems that should be studied with greater emphasis. Besides financial vulnerability and the recurrence of natural disasters as a result of climate change, Peru is particularly concerned by persistent unemployment in developing countries and the growing social

requirements that compromise democratic viability. We have to find creative formulas in order to strengthen democracy and governance.

We commend the Secretary-General for his proposal to present a revised programme budget in 2003, with the desire to provide an efficient instrument for the Organization to comply with its task. The delegation of Peru feels that it is important to grant the Secretary-General greater autonomy in the administration of resources. This greater flexibility could be accompanied by criteria for certain priority programme lines for developing countries which should not fall below the established limit.

The arguments that the duties of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) go to the Fifth Committee seem to be quite sound. This would give a greater consistency between strategic and programme planning, as well as budget allocation. If this proposal is approved after a more exhaustive assessment, we suggest that financial support continue so that experts from capitals of developing countries can take part in the debates of the Fifth Committee.

Peru is fully committed to democracy, good governance and the protection and promotion of human rights. As a result, we support the efforts designed to strengthen and perfect the United Nations human rights machinery and effective compliance with international commitments undertaken by Member States. As a result, we are awaiting an occasion to become familiar with and to express ourselves on the different reports and recommendations requested by the Secretary-General to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in actions 2 to 5.

Since it is not possible to dwell on all the proposals here, the delegation of Peru would simply like to record its support for the strengthening of the United Nations relationship with civil society and the private sector, for the need to improve the Organization's human resources policies, the strategic redefinition of the Department of Public Information and the enhancement of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Peru believes that it is of utmost importance to strengthen technical cooperation for developing countries. However, we are not very clear on what is being proposed in this area. It is important, of course, to establish a division of responsibilities and duties. But it is also important to have alternative approaches, instruments and sources of financing and technical cooperation to meet the needs of the countries that are on the receiving end.

I would like to conclude with two items. First of all, it seems certain that there has been some fatigue when it comes to holding major conferences. This, however, should not prevent periodic reviews of the implementation of commitments undertaken; nor should it deny the opportunity of calling upon the political will of Member States or the conscience of public opinion. We can imagine, for example, that, earlier than we might expect, we may feel the need to convene a world summit on global governance, including the question of global public good.

Secondly, we feel that it is important to have a more fluid and ongoing interaction between the various strata of Secretariat staff with Member States on the activities and work plans that are being carried out in the concrete implementation of the budget, as well as the medium-term plan. This is not a question of transparency, nor is it one of scrutiny. We do believe that this exists. Rather, it is a matter of achieving more fluid communication, as well as human contact. For example, for any representative who would like to become informed about certain facts, activities or to exchange points of view, all he or she can do is to read the reports, attend occasional panels or request interviews.

For this reason, the delegation of Peru feels that, as is common practice for any corporate management, it would be highly positive to have periodic informal meetings with the Under-Secretaries-General, heads of department and their teams on the different activities that are being carried out or being planned, as well as an exchange of points of view on questions of particular interest. These meetings could be held with the regional groups or other groups, such as the Rio Group. This would strengthen the feeling of belonging and partnership with the purpose that unites us all, that is, to achieve legitimacy, consistency and effectiveness for the Organization.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Ecuador, I am pleased to congratulate and thank the Secretary-General for the report on strengthening of the United Nations (document A/57/387) and to express our firm and decisive support for the proposals contained therein. This valuable document reflects the need to

carry out thorough reforms within the Organization in order to ensure that its work is effective and efficient, which would make it possible to comply with the objectives pointed out in the United Nations Charter, as well as the goals that have been set by member countries in recent world summits.

There have been changes. However, much still remains to be done. In order to take positive and fruitful steps towards the accomplishment of this objective, the Organization must respond to current demands, as well as to the new realities, of a world that offers enormous challenges and, at the same time, great opportunities.

In order to achieve one of the basic objectives of the Organization — a better world, more just, equitable and supportive — it is necessary to have the political will for establishing a solid foundation to enable leadership of the international community.

The Millennium Declaration is a framework for future action of the United Nations. The heads of State or Government of the Member countries expressed their commitment to making the Organization a more effective instrument in achieving the priority themes, such as the struggle for the development of all peoples in the world; the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease; the fight against injustice; fight against violence, terror and crime; and the fight against the degradation and destruction of our planet.

The Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg are important steps that have been taken in the past year and that establish very explicit and agreed upon lines of action to fulfill the goals that we have expressed.

In order to make substantive progress towards these objectives, we must immediately tackle the task of implementing the agreements that emerged from these summits. It is necessary to transcend mere words or reiteration of commitment and move towards the search for and implementation of innovative, viable and effective mechanisms that will lead us towards the objective we are all pursuing — that is, international peace and security.

We firmly believe that only development, in its broadest sense, would make it possible to move towards solid and lasting peace and international security. Social justice, respect for human rights and better opportunities for work and production for people in the developing world constitute the basis of a true guarantee of international security.

With the passing of time and increase in the number of its tasks, the General Assembly has stopped being the scene of major debates and a forum where we meet and willingly seek solutions to the challenges that history presents us with. Faced with this reality, it becomes clear that there is a need to reaffirm the primary function of the General Assembly, the main deliberative body that adopts policies and represents the United Nations, and where all States, without exception, take part democratically in deliberations.

For these reasons, it is certain that we need a renewed and strengthened multilateral system that would lay down the solid groundwork for effective international cooperation, based on common principles and norms, taking into consideration the requirements of the day.

The promotion and protection of human rights is of great importance for my country. In this respect, we feel it is particularly important to stress the proposal designed to improve different aspects of the relationship of Governments with the United Nations system. We greatly value the proposals that aim to strengthen the United Nations capacity to assist countries with the establishment of solid human-rights institutions.

We share the idea that public opinion is fundamental to strengthening the United Nations, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report. As a result, we believe that the proposals to redefine the duties of the Department of Public Information are also important.

Mr. President, the delegation of Ecuador would like to congratulate you on your current efforts to promote new stages in the reform process of the General Assembly, and we support them firmly. We also express our willingness to cooperate with the process that will lead to the revitalization of the Organization and make it possible to comply with the vision of men and women of this planet who would like to change the realities that affect our world.

Mr. Niculescu (Romania): Mr. President, at the outset, allow me to thank you for organizing such a timely debate on this agenda item, which is a matter of keen interest to all Member States, as well as for your

initiative in launching the process of informal consultations on further reform of our Organization, with the active and much appreciated participation of our Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Frechette.

My delegation has studied with particular interest the Secretary General's report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" which, without setting new priorities, brings to the fore some areas where we should focus our reform efforts in the coming months. This reform process began in 1997, and we continue to have full confidence in the capacity of the Secretary-General to direct and administer such a comprehensive reform. It is in this spirit that we share his vision on ways and means to arrive at a stronger United Nations, one better adapted and more responsive to the demands made by an era of globalization and unconventional challenges and threats.

In this respect, we agree that the main pillars of the United Nations system should be subject to a careful reform, based on the priorities and targets we set together in the Millennium Declaration. Thus, both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council need to adapt in order to realize their potential, and the process of Security Council reform needs new political impetus.

Turning to some more specific issues on the agenda for further change, my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the representative of Denmark and has several short comments and recommendations.

As the Secretary-General suggests in his report, the increasing role of the United Nations in dealing with globally important social and economic issues calls for a corresponding strengthening of the role played by the principal organ concerned — namely, the Economic and Social Council — which could become, in our view, the preeminent global forum for shaping development policies and strategies. We support the Secretary-General's recommendation about clarifying the General Assembly's responsibilities vis-à-vis those of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, in particular in relation to follow-up to the major conferences, in a way that will enable the Assembly to add value to the work of these bodies.

My delegation considers as necessary a comprehensive reorganization of the Department of Public Information, including a clear definition of its role within the United Nations system and a more coherent attribution of its responsibilities. We appreciate that, through its repositioning, the Department of Public Information will be able to develop more strategic activities and become a more effective tool in promoting a general picture of United Nations specific activities for the benefit of international public opinion. We are looking forward with great interest to hearing from the Secretary-General in his next report his specific proposals regarding the comprehensive review of the Department of Public Information's management system and activities, and we indicate our openness to a constructive dialogue with other delegations in this respect during the next session of the Committee on Information.

Regarding the United Nations information centres, Romania hosts such a Centre in Bucharest. The Centre is integrated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) field office. Romania supports the functioning of such centres in close cooperation with the system of the Resident Coordinator. On the subject of regional centres, we support the rationale for and the proposed substantive approach of all such centres' activities, while respecting the principle of the need for preliminary agreement on the part of the host country targeted for the establishment and functioning of possible regional centres. We await with interest the Secretariat's recommendations that are to be included in the additional report with a comprehensive review of the activities of the information centres drafted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

My delegation appreciates the fact that upgrading and improving the efficiency of the working methods of United Nations libraries is a necessary element of reform intended to, among other things, improve the current electronic access to the United Nations documents. We are convinced that a thorough examination of the different categories of publications issued by the Secretariat is much needed. That review should aim at reducing the number of publications while ensuring higher quality of content. We note that two additional reports are expected, one on the review of the United Nations system of libraries and the other on United Nations documents and publications. We believe that a future debate on these issues will be beneficial.

Romania supports the proposals put forward in the Secretary-General's report regarding the strengthening of the Organization's capability to promote and protect human rights. We particularly welcome the proposals aimed at consolidating the potential of the United Nations to assist Member States to develop stronger national institutions in the field of human rights. We believe that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights may play a crucial role in this respect.

In recent years, the interaction between the United Nations system and civil society organizations has reached unprecedented levels. More than 2,000 non-governmental organizations (NGO) currently enjoy consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, while thousands of such organizations have taken part in the various global events organized during the last decade under the aegis of the United Nations in the political and economic fields, as well as in global events dedicated to human rights topics. The Millennium Declaration enshrines the commitment of Member States to develop the potential offered by cooperation between the United Nations, civil society and the private sector. Nevertheless, we believe that increased coherence in the procedures for the accreditation and participation of NGOs in United Nations activities is yet to be found.

As we urged during the work of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, my delegation favours a clear designation of the responsibilities conferred upon the two Secretariat departments playing a key role in maintaining peace and international security, namely the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. That should be done while ensuring improved cooperation between the two Departments. It is our understanding that the basic role of the Department of Political Affairs lies in the fields of preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and peace-building. That Department therefore has responsibility for United Nations political and peace-building offices in the field, while the Department of Peacekeeping Operations coordinates the planning and management of all peace and security operations across the world. In that context, we reiterate the integrative and coordinating role to be played by the Executive Committee on Peace and Security in accordance with the Brahimi report.

With regard to the budgetary and financial implications of the reform package put forward by the Secretary-General, we take as a starting point the fact that the assumptions of our work are spelled out by the Millennium Declaration. In order to efficiently follow up on the priorities contained in the report, a flexible system for the allocation of adequate resources needs to be considered. While the underlying pattern of the budgetary process may have to be changed over time, a comprehensive review of the planning and budgeting cycle to align it with a results-based approach is nevertheless timely and welcome. An accountable planning and budgeting process should be responsive to the dynamic environment in which the Secretariat operates, not least in serving to simplify and improve procedures. For their part, it is imperative that Member States agree to ensure more streamlined and strengthened intergovernmental processes.

The Millennium Declaration could not be better supported than by improving the Organization's human, physical and information technology infrastructures. Enhanced programme delivery could result through investing in human resources management and swift implementation of the capital master plan.

In conclusion, I would like to express Romania's full support for the general vision embodied in the Secretary-General's report. In our opinion, that report requires a prompt, positive and integrated response on our part. We should also recognize that some recommendations and details are still subject to clarification and further agreement among Member States.

Mr. Sealy (Trinidad and Tobago): Speaking so late in this debate, in which many delegations have already engaged in an exhaustive examination of the 36 six actions recommended by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), it is the desire of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago to draw to the attention of the Assembly some aspects of that report that it considers to be fundamental if small delegations such as my own are to be able to participate effectively and efficiently in the work of the annual sessions of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General observes in his report that it is

> "crucially important that the Assembly continue its own reform efforts to further rationalize its agenda." (*A/57/387, para. 16*)

In that regard, he also notes that

> "Great improvements are possible, however, if duplicative items can be combined, and closely related issues clustered into a single discussion, leading to outcomes of greater policy relevance and impact." (*ibid*)

My delegation has noted that some measures in that regard have already been put in motion. We welcome that development, but believe that further action is necessary in that respect.

The Secretary-General also points out that

> "The pattern of recurring agenda items should also be rigorously reviewed, with many issues addressed biennially, or at even longer intervals." (*ibid*)

That approach to the rationalization of the agenda is one to which the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago can subscribe fully, as it would give member Governments a more adequate time frame within which to implement at the national level commitments undertaken at the international level. Additionally, it would afford the Secretariat the opportunity to optimally rationalize its use of resources in carrying out the many actions called for in all of our resolutions. Such an approach would also enable the United Nations to revisit a subject area after a number of years to determine what substantive developments have in fact taken place within that period at the global level. Of course, the issues to be so treated should be identified through a process designed on the basis of transparent, clearly defined and agreed criteria.

A related aspect of this issue is that, while it is a customary practice at almost every annual session of the United Nations General Assembly to allow States the opportunity to request the inclusion of additional agenda items, there is not a corresponding tendency on the part of States to remove any items from the Assembly's agenda. It is the view of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago that a proactive General Committee, given its broad and representative nature, can effectively discharge the mandate of determining the periodicity with which agenda items are considered and/or the possibility of their deletion from the agenda.

The Secretary-General has also referred in his report to the overwhelming number of meetings. According to his report, over the biennium 2000-2001 a staggering 15,484 meetings were held and 5,879 reports were issued. The proliferation of meetings and official documents, in his view, places excessive demands on both the Secretariat and Member States, and his report goes on to state quite categorically that "Many smaller Member States now find it practically impossible to play a meaningful role in even the most crucial activities of the General Assembly" (*para. 23*). As a result of those pressures, the report indicates that there is now a palpable need to curtail the volume of official meetings and documents.

The situation is exacerbated further, as noted in the report, due to the fact that at present the "reports are overwhelming in number, tend towards duplication and are fragmented in their impact" (*para. 87*). More than 500 reports, it is stated, were submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, and the Secretary-General returns to an all too familiar theme when noting that Member States, especially the smaller countries, find it difficult to cope with the mountains of paper that need to be absorbed and acted upon. The Secretariat itself, the report continues, is struggling to keep abreast of the growing number of reports requested by the various inter-governmental bodies and the sheer volume of the demands is "drowning its ability to provide focused and value-added analysis" (*para. 88*).

The Secretary-General's overall analysis of this situation, which also highlights the frequency of reporting and the fact that requests for reports to be produced periodically stay on the books long after they have become obsolete, leads to his action 11, which calls for consolidating reports on related subjects and for the General Assembly to establish a mechanism to review the continuing need for and frequency of recurring reporting requirements. The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago supports the Secretary-General's call for such a mechanism and is of the opinion that the respective bureaux of the Main Committees, together with the prime movers of individual draft resolutions, can play an effective role in that regard.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago, as a small delegation of a small United Nations Member State, is of the view that action in those two areas would be extremely beneficial to the work of the United Nations and would lead to more effective

participation by Member States, large and small, in the annual deliberations of the General Assembly.

My delegation has not found it opportune at this time to examine every action recommended in the report, but wishes to draw to the Assembly's attention that the initiatives in the report reflect the ideas and suggestions of every part of the Secretariat and the consultations held with all of the funds and programmes of the Organization. The observation was also made by the Deputy Secretary-General during the informal briefing that the Committee on Conferences is supportive of the actions recommended in respect of its area of competence and that the chapter on human resources has been discussed with staff representatives.

The Secretary-General has himself restated in his introduction of the report that the whole package hangs together as a coherent whole, and he has asked us to treat it as such. The Secretary-General has done his work, and it is now up to the Assembly to give him a clear and positive legislative mandate for him to proceed to implement the further reforms that he, as the chief administrative officer, has identified that the system is in need of in the short, medium and long term if we are to make the United Nations a more effective instrument in the service of mankind.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago is prepared to work with you, Mr. President, and with other interested delegations in any open-ended informal consultations to discuss in depth the actions recommended in the report and to prepare the necessary omnibus draft resolution, which we are sure would be adopted without a vote by this Assembly in the time frame you have indicated.

Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on strengthening of the United Nations (A/57/387). Having read the entire report, we believe that the Secretariat has the enthusiasm and the vision to pursue the necessary reforms that began five years ago.

The vitality of the debate and the broad participation in it reflect the importance that Member States attach to the issue of the desired reforms, which in turn reflects an increasing recognition of the magnitude of the challenges we face today and our collective conviction regarding the role of the United Nations as a centre for international decision-making and for realizing the collective will. The Millennium Declaration not only defines the goals and the direction of our future work, but also identifies an effective role for the Organization now and in the future.

It is well known that our noble objective is the maintenance of international peace and security. It is also common knowledge that peace will not prevail unless it is based on justice and equity, be it in the areas of security and sovereignty or in that of the distribution of resources and well-being.

The delegation of Yemen has spoken already on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/57/1). We support the further measures the Secretary-General has proposed in the report (A/57/387) before us today. We cannot now go into detail on all the proposals contained in the report, but we would like to state that the nature of the challenges we face and the interrelation among our shared interests in this era of globalization make it imperative to strengthen the role and effectiveness of the United Nations as an institution for multilateral international endeavour. At the same time, we consider attempts to form alliances outside the context of this Organization to contravene the Millennium Declaration and the objective of achieving democracy in international relations.

We wish to address in particular issues related to the General Assembly and the Security Council. Reform means correcting the mistakes of the past. We agree with the Secretary-General's report that the role of the General Assembly in the work of the United Nations is diminishing. That is a shortcoming that must be corrected. For our part, we support all efforts to revitalize the General Assembly and, Mr. President, we hail your personal efforts. We also consider that the expansion of the membership of the Security Council is an issue upon which we all agree. It is one of the most important reforms that must be carried out.

We wish to emphasize what the representative of Venezuela said on behalf of the Group of 77 and China: that reform of the Organization should target, first and foremost, the development needs of developing nations. This makes it imperative that the activities of the components of the Organization, including the Department of Public Information, be directed to that end. Here, we must emphasize the need to strengthen United Nations information centres in developing nations, because those nations lack information technology and modern media. Among the areas that

need that support are the Arab countries, where intensive information activities are needed to correct the image of the United Nations within Arab public opinion and explain its role in working for the benefit of one and all. We still believe that the United Nations Information Centre in Sana'a can perform that task if it is strengthened and supported.

There is no doubt that the United Nations needs new blood and new ideas that will open opportunities to the young people of the developing countries and enable them to assume positions in the international civil service. This will contribute to the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the United Nations employment policies, which have yet to be implemented, and to attain the required universality.

We wish to assure you, Sir, that the delegation of the Republic of Yemen remains ready to participate in all consultations on any views and proposals that will help to strengthen our Organization and enable it to perform its role in guiding and forming international relations, in consonance with the principles and purposes of the Charter.

Mr. Nakkari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for submitting the report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change". We appreciate his interest in strengthening the work of the Organization in response to the priorities enshrined in the Millennium Declaration.

We share the Secretary-General's view that there is a need for a multilateral institution devoted to the service of humankind as a whole. That need has never been more urgent than it is in this age of globalization. Needless to say, keeping our methods of work under constant review is essential so that we may benefit from experience, allowing us to correct past mistakes and to enhance the methods used to implement the goals of the United Nations. The reform of the Security Council and the strengthening of the role of the General Assembly fall into this same context.

The report is of special importance, addressing as it does the strengthening of the United Nations as a whole. It is an ambitious programme that allows us to hope that we will be able to strengthen and improve the Organization's mechanisms of work with a view to its implementation of the letter and spirit of the Charter and to its ability to respond to the challenges outlined in the Millennium Declaration and to apply the relevant legislative mandates in all its tasks.

There is no doubt that this great ambition requires the revitalization of the process of Security Council reform in order to make it more democratic. It further requires the establishment of new frameworks in the relationship between the United Nations and its specialized agencies, bodies, organizations, programmes and funds, as well as the strengthening of the central role of the General Assembly. It requires effective mechanisms for implementation that would enable the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, among other United Nations bodies, to follow up on the implementation of their recommendations.

In the light of all this, my delegation wishes to offer brief comments on the report before us, since the report addresses a number of important issues and makes a number of proposals that the General Assembly should consider and engage with. The report is rich in information and the issues it tackles are diverse. It raises a number of questions to which the representative of Venezuela referred in his statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

It would be useful to us to know what is required of the General Assembly in the light of the points raised in the report, some of which require the Secretary-General's approval or fall under his competence, while others are in the purview of the General Assembly. Informal consultations will undoubtedly help to clarify for delegations those questions that were raised during the debate on the report, including those raised by the Group of 77 and China.

It can be said that the necessary measures are confined to issues which the Main Committees of the General Assembly are accustomed to addressing. The discussion of most of these issues is generally carried out in the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. A number of other proposed steps relate to the work of the Second, Third and Fourth Committees. It would seem useful to us in this context to seek to benefit from the accrued expertise and experience of those Committees. It would also be meaningful to build on prior achievements with a view to strengthening the current legislative mandates.

My delegation would like to make a number of general observations on some points raised in the report.

First, with respect to the promotion of the Department of Public Information, the report highlights the ambitious goals of that Department to reach the largest possible global audience. We stress the necessity of achieving parity on the Internet among the six official languages of the Organization. This would allow us to achieve the goal of reaching the broadest possible audience and enable the Organization to spread its message, in implementation of many United Nations resolutions.

Secondly, with respect to publications and the work of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management, my delegation believes that the management of meetings is an entitlement of the Member States and not of the Secretariat. We emphasize the need for the publications and documentation of the United Nations to reach the Member States in the six official languages. They must be distributed simultaneously and in a timely manner, in accordance with current legislative mandates. I note the leading role played by the Department in preserving the institutional memory of the Organization and in disseminating hard-copy reports in the six official languages of the Organization. This allows delegations, particularly the smaller ones, to engage with the Secretary-General's proposals and to interact with the intergovernmental bodies, since most such reports are the bases of negotiations between delegations.

Thirdly, my delegation believes that the establishment of an additional position of Assistant Secretary-General to support policy coherence and management in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is worthy of our support.

Fourthly, the medium-term plan is the framework that allows us to examine the Organization's policies and their implementation. A four-year time frame would be more effective for coordinating those policies. A detailed, transparent budget would help to ensure that funding of the programmes is in line with legislative policies and mandates. My delegation would like to stress the important role played by the Committee for Programme Coordination in examining the policies of the Organization and in ensuring coordination and funding of legislative mandates.

Allow me to indicate that the sunset provisions mentioned in paragraph 44 of the report — which states the need to examine initiatives with major financial implications and to apply sunset provisions to them — make us wonder whether or not the eradication of poverty is one of the Organization's main priorities. The Organization's survival depends on the achievement of its goals, and one of its main goals is eradication of poverty. Revitalization of the General Assembly hinges upon that concept.

Fifthly, as to human resources management, my delegation believes that the United Nations staff is the Organization's most valuable asset. We emphasize the need to benefit from what has been achieved in reforming the management of human resources, and to take into account the points of view of the staff in that matter. The Secretary-General is right that the principles and the system of internal justice must be strengthened. We must close the loophole created by suppression of the role of the International Court of Justice as an appeals court for the United Nations staff. It is vital to close that loophole. Increased scope for delegation of authority makes it necessary to strengthen accountability.

In conclusion, we believe the important issues raised by the Secretary-General in his report require constructive interaction through broadened examination and in-depth reflection, and will benefit from the invaluable clarifications which the Secretariat will provide us during our informal consultations on the item.

Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas (Bolivia) *(spoke in Spanish)*: The item we are discussing today is extremely important. The strengthening of the United Nations should be a constant element in the concern, the action and the responsibility of the international community and, in particular, of every Member State, large or small, represented in this great Assembly.

The United Nations is the premier world forum for the discussion of major problems affecting mankind as a whole as well as individuals. The complex and delicate questions of international peace and security; the liberation of peoples and nations; the creation and formation of new States in the process of decolonization; the efforts to improve the social and economic situation of millions of human beings; the promotion of human rights; development; the

protection of the environment: all these have for some time been on the political agenda of the Organization.

Each year, the Assembly conducts an assessment of the work of the Organization through the report of the Secretary-General (see A/57/1). The outcome of that assessment has been mixed, as we saw in the recent debate on that item. Although this assessment is partial, fragmented and subjective, we have seen positive and concrete progress in the work of the Organization, in the areas such as peacekeeping operations — which earned the Nobel Peace Prize; the establishment of the State of Timor-Leste under the auspices of the United Nations and its accession to membership of the Organization; the holding of the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey and Johannesburg summits. These are clear examples of achievements of the Organization that we can mention as sources of great satisfaction.

However, there are also reasons to be somewhat dissatisfied. We need only mention the problems of underdevelopment.

In terms of time, we have entered a new century and a new millennium. In terms of space, we have entered the era of globalization. We have a new context, where the old unresolved problems have worsened and taken on a global dimension, becoming at the same time formidable new challenges.

The sustainability and strengthening of democracies; respect for international law; the promotion, respect and full observance of human, political, economic and cultural rights: these are crucial for better peaceful coexistence. We see extreme poverty at the global level; it is no longer acceptable to the international community. Enormous inequalities in access to the benefits of economic, trade, financial and technological activities have also increased and have worsened both nationally and internationally, bordering on the unacceptable. The deterioration of every aspect of our environment is intolerable.

If that were not enough, in this process of globalization we have seen the emergence of new threats: international crime, terrorism, the illicit trafficking of arms and drugs, and the rise of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. Technological advances, paradoxically, have opened a new and wider gap between those who possess information and knowledge and the dispossessed. Combined with all of this, we have changes and crises in the economies of developing countries as a result of globalization, which in many cases has threatened to further widen already existing social inequalities.

The current situation of the world in which we live and its prospects for the future are not at all promising. On the contrary, we can say they are uncertain and dramatic. Allow me to mention three specific examples. With regard to the lack of food and security, according to the latest statistics of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 840 million people in the world are malnourished. This means that 11 million people in industrialized countries, 30 million in the countries in transition and 799 million in developing countries suffer chronic hunger. Of these, 6 million children under the age of five die each year.

Another example with respect to health, the September-October 2002 edition of "Population 2005", quotes a United Nations report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic as saying that over the next 20 years, 70 million people will die of AIDS. As a third example, on the distribution of wealth in the world, 14 per cent of the world population, concentrated in the developed countries, produce and consume 75 per cent of the world product, while the remaining 86 per cent are responsible for the other 25 per cent. Those statistics are very illustrative and need no further commentary.

Those are only a few of the real problems facing the United Nations and the international community. It is against that background that we must ask ourselves whether our Organization has the capacity necessary to tackle such problems and challenges. I am afraid that the answer would be, in general "no", with some worthy exceptions. We are sure that this situation is at the heart of the concerns of the Secretary-General and of the Assembly.

The Secretary-General is now proposing a new response through his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1). Here, we wish to express our sincere appreciation and support for the efforts and goals of the Secretary-General to strengthen the Organization. The report proposes a set of actions and measures which, in the opinion of the Secretary-General, are practical and pragmatic. They appear modest if considered separately, but they could have greater impact if taken as a whole.

At the present time, our delegation will not make any observations or an assessment of the actions and measures proposed because of the doubts we still have on their scope, some of their implications, their means of implementation and on the cost versus benefits. We are certain that those doubts will be clarified in the course of the informal consultations following this debate. In that respect, we support the statement of the Group of 77.

Nevertheless, we would like to make a few comments on how we view this reform proposal in general. We believe, perhaps a little empirically and subjectively, that the proposals are somewhat modest, especially when measured against the problems and challenges faced by the Organization in the real world in which we live. We also see that these definitely valuable proposals are designed to improve the internal operation of the Organization. Of course, it is very important, above all else, to put our house in order. As the report states, the reform is a programme to further change and to adapt the internal structure and the mentality of the United Nations to new expectations and challenges.

In this process of new reforms, we would have liked to see more clearly how to strengthen the external operation of the Organization so that it can improve and extend its reach throughout the world. We believe that the Organization has a very important role to play in events on the world stage, along with other actors, States and other international institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. Here, we are referring particularly to the process of globalization, which is shaping a new world characterized by the supremacy of the interests of multinational corporations, which have a mercantilist vision of trade relations, investment and scientific and technical knowledge. We know that this process is affecting and changing the behaviour of societies at all levels — even the most remote societies — as well as the behaviour of actors on the international stage, including the United Nations, with all the positive and negative risks and consequences that the process of globalization entails.

But we also believe that the United Nations must assume a leadership role and have a greater presence on the world stage. It must be capable of influencing, impacting and even shaping the process of globalization in order to make it more human and more responsible towards the basic and social needs of millions of human beings. We agree with the observation of the European Union, also cited by the Ambassador of Singapore: "The ultimate aim of our work in the United Nations is to make the world a better place for the poor people of the planet." (*A/57/PV.38*)

In this regard, with due respect, we disagree with the Ambassador of Singapore. It is not through the allocation of the budget of the Organization that we are going to help create the conditions for a better world. We are convinced that it is through compliance with the commitments pledged by the Member States of the Organization that the world will start to change for the better.

In this context, we believe that the Organization should also have an agenda for change towards the world. Allow me to give an example. The Organization has the mandate to follow up the implementation of the goals and achievements of the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit. But we believe that mere follow-up is not enough. The Organization, in a practical and pragmatic spirit, can and must also carry out an effort to promote — lobbying, as they say — compliance with those commitments. There should be a visible leadership figure responsible for this work, who can be described as creating awareness at the highest level, as well as at a personal level, among the political leaders of States. The United Nations is in a privileged position because it possesses great moral authority and a strong sense of social justice.

We wish to conclude by reiterating our appreciation and support for the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen our Organization, and we reiterate our commitment to participating in the consultations in a constructive spirit of solidarity.

The President: We have just heard the last speaker in the plenary debate on agenda item 52 on strengthening of the United Nations system.

Before I adjourn the meeting, let me make some concluding remarks. First, I would like to thank all of you who have participated in the debate for your attentive and thoughtful observations. It was a very rich and interesting debate. We have listened to 71 statements, with various views and numerous constructive and well-grounded suggestions.

Despite the diversity of comments, almost all statements have had many points in common. I would like to summarize briefly some of the points that prevailed in many speeches. It seems to me that we have already found a common ground of understanding which could serve us a starting point for the upcoming informal consultations. I have heard strong support, for example, for the following perceptions. There is appreciation of the Secretary-General for coming forward with a comprehensive set of new reform proposals and for his continuing effort in making the United Nations more productive, efficient and effective.

Secondly, there is recognition of the need for a holistic approach towards all agenda items related to United Nations reform — namely, revitalization of the General Assembly and the integrated follow-up on global conferences — so that the changes that are being introduced under various agenda items complement one another and pull together in the same direction.

Thirdly, the United Nations development agenda clearly remains at the centre of the work of the United Nations, and the next programme budget would better reflect the priorities agreed upon at the Millennium Assembly as well as at other United Nations conferences.

Fourthly, the implementation plan to strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization's presence in developing countries was generally welcomed.

Lastly — and I am giving only a few examples — general agreement was also expressed with regard to proceeding with reform measures that are within the competence of the Secretary-General. I was particularly pleased to realize, first, that it will not necessarily be difficult to formulate an agreed position among Member States concerning many proposals put forward by the Secretary-General for which authorization by the General Assembly is needed, and secondly, that all delegations that expressed their concerns and reservations with regard to some of the proposed actions did so in a constructive manner. That leads me to believe that we have a constructive process of consultations and negotiations before us.

As I promised at the beginning of this debate, I should now like to advise the Assembly that I have appointed Mr. Abdul Mejid Hussein, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, to assist me in leading the process of informal consultation. Moreover, we will be assisted by the following Facilitators: Mr. Movses Abelian, Permanent Representative of Armenia; Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh; Mr. Luis Gallegos Chiriboga, Permanent Representative of Ecuador; Mr. Denis Dangue Réwaka, Permanent Representative of Gabon; Mr. Mochamad Slamet Hidayat, Chargé d'Affaires of Indonesia; Mr. Stafford O. Neil, Permanent Representative of Jamaica; Mr. Mohamed Bennouna, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco; Mr. Dirk Jan van den Berg, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands; Mr. Don MacKay, Permanent Representative of New Zealand; and Mr. Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan.

They all kindly agreed to facilitate communication between the presidency and the membership during the process of informal consultations and negotiations on resolutions through what I would call very informal outreach and, beyond any formal structures, they will work towards a kind of expanded transparency. Each delegation can, of course, contact any of the Facilitators I have just mentioned — regardless of region or subregion — and share with him its concerns, ideas and suggestions at any time. I have clearly asked the Facilitators to conduct as many voluntary consultations with Member States as possible. I should like to stress that they will not stand between Members and myself — quite the contrary. They will assist me and the Vice-Presidents in learning about as many of your ideas as possible, and they will enable us to learn more about your suggestions than we could find out relying 24 hours a day on our own human capacity.

I should like to announce that the open-ended informal consultations will begin on Monday afternoon, 4 November, when we shall consider the issues of public information, development and social and economic issues. That will be the first item, and I am referring here to issues under Chapter II (a) and (c), to those under all of Chapter III and to those under Chapter IV (a) and (b). Essentially, we shall deal with proposed actions 1 and 6-18 on Monday. The informal consultations that will follow are scheduled for Wednesday and Friday. I shall announce on Monday the themes to be discussed Wednesday and Friday, but be assured that we shall cover all of the themes raised during the plenary debate and in Members' submitted questions.

I have listened to Members' statements very carefully. On the basis of those statements — and also, of course, on the interventions to be made during the forthcoming informal consultations — I plan to submit the first draft of the resolution, which will reflect the views of Members, shortly after mid-November. I should like to reiterate that the process will be open and transparent, and that the informal consultations will continue for as long as necessary. I should also like to assure Members that my own door will remain open to everyone during the entire process. I am genuinely looking forward to your close cooperation, which I believe will yield a good resolution.

Let me repeat my conviction — expressed at the beginning of this debate — that we should be able to agree on this resolution before Christmas, so that next year we can concentrate on some of the more detailed work that will need to be carried out by experts in their respective Committees.

Before I adjourn the meeting, I should like to make an announcement regarding an addition to the programme of work for the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on Monday morning, 4 November. The Assembly will consider, as the third item, sub-item (a) of agenda item 41, "Final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", in order to take action on a draft resolution contained in document A/57/468/Add.1, recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Final Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 52.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.